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POETIC FRAGMENTS FROM THE GENIZAH

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It is more than seventy years since Franz Delitzsch gave for the first time an historical account of the development of post-Biblical Hebrew poetry. During the three generations that have passed since the appearance of his memorable work: "*Zur Geschichte der jüdischen Poesie*" (Leipzig, 1836), many new names were added to the list of ancient Hebrew poets and not a few important works brought to light, and the feeling was current that the time had already become ripe for a similar work on a larger scale. But with the discovery of the Genizah, the conviction has come upon us that until this new mine of Jewish lore is thoroughly explored every branch of Mediæval Jewish literature—poetry not excepted—will have to wait for its history, or risk being premature. The discoverer of the Genizah has himself shown us by his numerous publications what a vast amount of new information we may expect to find in it relating to the most obscure periods in Jewish history and literature. With this conviction firmly fixed in mind, we cannot help but value even the smallest contribution coming from this ancient source, and it is in this spirit that the following fragments are here presented.¹

¹ I take this opportunity of thanking Prof. Schechter for placing these fragments at my disposal.

I. QUOTATIONS FROM "MAHZOR YANNAL."

In his biography of Kalir, Rapoport was the first to draw our attention to the existence of an ancient Payyetan by the name of Yannai whom he found mentioned in a responsum of Rabbi Gershom, cited in the *Shibbole Halleket* of Zedekiah ben Abraham Anaw.² In this passage Yannai is named before Kalir and is described as "one of the early sages who composed Kerobot for every order of the year".³ A dozen years later,⁴ while still engaged in his polemic with Luzzatto about the time and place of Kalir, Rapoport brought forth the additional information, given him by Zunz, that in a certain liturgical MS.,⁵ just preceding the Kerobot of the "Great Sabbath", a note was added, perhaps by Ephraim of Bonn⁶, saying, that the poem **אוני פטרי רחמתי** was taken for the composition of Yannai the teacher of Kalir, and that the people of Lombardy refrained from reciting it because of a legend which told that out of jealousy Yannai brought about the death of his pupil. As to the poem itself, Zunz pointed out that it was written in

² **בכו"ה**, 1829, III.

³ Cf. **ר' ינאי שהיה מן החכמים**, ed. Buber, 25: **הראשונים ופייט קרובות לכל סדר וסדר שלכל השנה**. This responsum was also published by Landshuth (**עמודי העבודה**, 102) from a MS. **מעשה הגאונים** by Zedekiah Anaw, which he says was bought by the Bodleian library in 1854, but no mention of it is to be found in Neubauer's Catalogue. Prof. Marx found in the covers of an old book two MS. leaves, one of which contains the above responsum, but is no part of the **שבלי הלקט**, as the remaining passages show. It has also the important variant **וגם ר' פסח לכל הרגלים** instead of **קלוימום שמענו שחכם גדול היה ופייט קרובות של פסח**. Perhaps this leaf is a part of the **מעשה הגאונים**.

⁴ **כרם חמר**, VI (1841), 25.

⁵ Rapoport does not say which, but perhaps it is codex München 69. See Zunz, *Lit.*, 28, note 4.

⁶ The same who is responsible for the legend about R. Amnon, the author of **ונתנה תוקף** (**כ"ח**, *ibid*).

rime and had the Alphabet and the name יניי in acrostic.⁷ Later it was asserted by Luzzatto that the poem או רוב נסים הפלאות which is found in the same part of the prayers was likewise the composition of Yannai.⁸

Although Rapoport clung to his theory that both Yannai and Kalir lived in Italy, yet his critical sense detected the influence of Palestine in the way Yannai spelled his name in the acrostic.⁹ But it is the general opinion of scholars now, that Yannai was a Palestinian and that he flourished not later than the second half of the seventh century.¹⁰ This latter assertion finds its support in the fact brought out by Harkavy, that in two places Kirkisani says of Anan, the founder of the Karaite sect, that he used the liturgical compositions of Yannai (חזאנה ינאי).¹¹ In this connection it may also be said, that Yannai was mentioned by Jehudi ben Sheshet, a pupil of Dunash ben Labrat, as Dukes pointed out.¹² Mention of Yannai is also found in Saadya's

⁷ כ"ח, *ibid.*; *Litg.*, 28. This poem is found in מחזור כמנהג אשכנזים, Cremona 1561; Venice 1600; Vienna 1823 and in סדר שער השמים of Isaiah Hurwitz, Amsterdam 1717.

⁸ מחזור איטאליאני, Leghorn 1856, 10. His reason is that the סילוק or completing stanza of the poem אוני פמרי רחמתיים, which begins with the words כי אין לפניך לילה fits in well with the refrain ויהי ברחמי הלילה. But this is hardly any proof, as any one else could have done the same. Rapoport, however, is of the same opinion (המוניד, 1863, 23). S. A. Wertheimer in גנני ירושלם (Jerusalem 1901), 18 b, 19 a published two poems of Yannai: שיר השירים אשירה נא לידידי for the seventh day of Passover from an Oxford MS. (see Neubauer, Cat. II, 2708 r) and תענו אז בפתרום for the second Sabbath before the ninth of Ab (see Brody in *Jewish Encyc.*, XII, 586); see also Graetz, *Die Anfänge der neuhebräischen Poesie* (MGWJ., VIII, 401 and IX, 19, 57).

⁹ That is יניי, not ינאי. Cf. כ"ח, VI, 26.

¹⁰ Cf. Harkavy, *Studien und Mittheilungen* V, 106. Brody, *l. c.*, puts him as early as the first half of the seventh century.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

¹² תשובות יהודי, Hannover 1853, 2. See also S. G. Stern, נחל קדומים ל"ק, 158. אבן ששט, 37, line 12, and cf. Pinsker, 158.

ספר האגרון,¹³ and in No. LI of Prof. Schechter's *Saadyana*, which is a fragment of an old work on the art of poetry, the writings of the "well known-Yannai" (ינאי אלמערופ) are cited as examples of rimed prose.¹⁴

The fragment given below¹⁵ proves beyond a doubt that there did exist at one time a collection of Yannai's liturgical compositions (מחזור ינאי) and that it was so well known that the mere mention of the first lines was all that was necessary for the scribe to give. Our fragment has three such lines: או בהקרא באוני עניי מות; אם לך שלטון בכל חי and אסומה פתוחה ממקור חכמות. It also has a longer quotation from the Mahzor, designated as רהט, which is complete as far as it goes, but the concluding words seem to indicate that it is only a part of a larger composition.

What the original character of our MS. was is difficult to say, but the three pages that have been preserved consist of five sections, each section consisting of the לחן, or melody, the poem which is to be recited with that particular *lahn*, and a פומן, or refrain. Of the first section, however, we have only the refrain, as the *lahn* was mentioned in the preceding page, now lost, and the poem itself is also not recorded. The second section says that "the congregation itself shall then say two verses again with the *lahn* פומן אלו משובה" and the פומן אלו אלי.¹⁶ But the name of the poem from which these verses are to be

¹³ Harkavy, *l. c.*, 50.

¹⁴ Cf. Bacher's translation of this fragment in *JQR.*, XIV, 743; חזונו ינאי also occurs in a Genizah fragment published by Poznanski (*JQR.*, XV, 77, No. 12).

¹⁵ T-S. LOAN, 165, 2 leaves paper, 13 x 10 cm. square writing approaching cursive style. The last page is blank. There are several corrections in the text made by the scribe himself, but these are not reproduced here as they are of no importance.

¹⁶ Cf. below Fol. 1, *recto*, line 5-6.

taken is not stated. It must have been mentioned before. The last section, again, has also the רהט in addition to the *lahn*, the poem and the refrain. If the pieces designated as פזמון are not merely refrains but the beginnings of larger poems, then we may say that our fragment has preserved for us the beginnings of thirteen liturgical pieces, four of which at least are those of Yannai.¹⁷ The whole fragment seems to deal with the life and death of Moses. It is therefore not unlikely that we have here a part of the liturgy for the day of the Rejoicing of the Law.

(Fol. I recto)

[§ 1] ...מנ. ביתין באל לחן אל מדבור
 ויקאל עליה פזמ' ששד סיחו¹⁸ ללוקח
 רוחו וצורו הבמיהו * בטובת פענוח[ן]¹⁹
 ובן מאה ועשרים כהלך לנוחו לא כהתה
 עינו ולא נם לחה²⁰: תם²¹ יקאל מן אל ארפה²²
 [§ 2] בעינהא ביתין איצא בלחן אמר המן

¹⁷ They are as follows: 1) שפך סיחו [שיחו] ללוקח רוחו

2) אלי אלי שמעה בקולי 3) אמר המן לאבד

4) אם לך שלטון בכל חי 5) את לבב עמי מה תשבר

6) אז בהקרא באוני עניו 8) את בני בכרי 7) יקר בעיני יי

9) אמומה פתוחה 11) מתי תפסח 10) ומי רועה כמותי

12) יחי ראובן ובתים ייבן 13) אב להכמים בבואו למות

¹⁸ Read שיהו.

¹⁹ The rime requires the correction; on the use of this word see Zunz, *Synagogale Poesie*, 429-430.

²⁰ Deut. 34, 7. The characteristic of this Pizmon as well as of those that follow is that they conclude with a verse from the Bible. The scribe indicated the quotation by putting two points in an oblique way over one or more of the words of the quotation. Here, then, is an early form of quotation marks.

²¹ = *thumma*.

²² *mina-l-ulfati* = "by the congregation". See Lane, I, 80 c.

²³ There is nothing missing here, but the scribe crossed out something which he started to write.

לאבד אום משובה²⁴ ומפזמן
 אלי אלי שמעה בקולי • ועם גורלי
 אעבור ברנלי • לחלקי וחבלי • ושמחת
 גילי • ראה עניי ועמלי²⁵ • אלהים ייִי חילי:
 [§ 3] אחר לחן את לבב עמי מה תשבך •
 אם לך שלטון בכל חי וכול במחזור ינאי²⁶
 פזמי יקר בעיני ייִי המותה לחסידיו²⁷

(Fol. I, verso)

[§ 4] אחר לחן את בני בכרי •
 אז בהקרא באזני עניו²⁷ מות²⁸ • וכול במחזור ינאי²⁹
 פזמי ומי רעה כמותי • לנהג עדתי • ומי
 יספר נחמתי • על חלקי ונחלתי • אשביעד
 משרתי²⁹ • בלוקח נשמתי • שמור מרעיתי
 אחרי מותי • ואולם אני אדרוש לאל
 ואל אלהים אשים דברתי³⁰ :
 [§ 5] אחר לחן מתי תפסח³¹ •
 אסומה³² פתוחה ממקור חכמות וכול
 במחזור ינאי ז"ל פזמי • אב לחכמים³³
 בבואו למות • איזן מרומות ושימע
 הדומות³⁴ • וברך שבטים ופיץ³⁵ בנאימות
 יחי ראובן ואל ימות³⁶ :
 רהט³⁷ יחי ראובן
 ובתים ייבן • וישקט שמעון במקדש

²⁴ Jerem. 3, 6.

²⁵ Joel 3, 19.

²⁶ Ps. 116, 15.

²⁷ Num. 12, 3.

²⁸ Read מות.

²⁹ Num. 11, 28.

³⁰ Job 5, 8.

³¹ This is perhaps to be read מתי תפסח, cf. II Kings 15, 16.

³² For a similar use of the root אסם see Zunz, *Litg.*, 148, No. 7.

³³ Cf. משה חכם גדול אב החכמים ואב הנביאים, ed. Friedman, 50 b, 21 b: ראש השנה also חמשים שערי בינה נבראו בעולם וכולם נתנו למשה חסר אחד.

³⁴ Cf. Isa. 66, 1: הארץ הדם רגלי and Deut. 32, 1.

³⁵ On the use of this word see Zunz, *Synag., Poesie*, 380.

³⁶ Deut. 33, 6.

³⁷ See Zunz, *l. c.*, 79; Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature*, § 18 at the end.

(Fol. 2 recto)

ומען³⁸ · סגן לוי · יכהן בנוי · פרחי יהודה
 פציחו בתודה · חניט³⁹ · יששכר · יקחו טוב
 שכר · זרע זבולון · זכות יונחלון · נער דן ·
 טובות יתעדן · ילדי נפתלי · שבע רצון
 אלי · זקני גד · אֵילָנָם יומגד⁴⁰ · כתות
 אשר · יצליחו בכושר · המון יוסף
 צרים ישסף · שבט בנימין יפרוץ
 שמאל וימין · שבטים שנים עשר
 ברכתם תומסר · ויעמוד כמוסר
 מיכאל השר⁴¹ : ונערי... אלהינו
 אל אלהים חזק אותו · וכול במחזור ינאי

³⁸ Ps. 26, 8.³⁹ חניט = mature men, a term borrowed from agriculture just as פרחי.
 Cf. ראש השנה 15 b: שחנמו פירותיו · אילן.⁴⁰ Deut. 33, 13.⁴¹ Cf. Dan. 12, 1. The meaning is perhaps that Michael the tutelary
 angel of Israel will oppose Samael the denunciator [read במוסר] of Israel.
 Cf. Gen. R., c. 21.